# OUR FAITH

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Purpose:--"*To diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure religion, which, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus, is summed up in love to God and love to man.*"

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## Prayer

*Our Father, who art in a new heaven of our high desire and upon a new earth of our faithful deed, let the voice of thy Son, the first of many brethren, speak to us again.*

*Many there are who speak in his name, but their voices are not like his. The congregations are not joyfully astonished at the teaching, nor do the rulers of the people tremble with rage. The prayer he gave to help our strong simplicity has become one of the vain repetitions. The sermon is no longer from a hill, but from the narrow vale of tradition. The multitudes are as sheep having no shepherd and they are being destroyed. Let the mind that was in Christ Jesus speak to us again.*

*We toil and spin with little pride in our work, and we dim our eyes to this beautiful earth. The barns of the world are overflowing with goods, and whole nations go hungry and round the platter of life the tiger in man whets his teeth anew. The smoke of our quarrelings have darkened the skies; and we fear no longer thee but the lightning of our own senseless skills. O God, through thy Son, our brother of old time and forever, speak to us again.*

*Our goodness has only separated us from the bad, and not held us in the embrace of a saving fellowship. We are lonely in our virtues and lonely in our sins. Our frivolity has become shrill and our tears bitter, for both seem as foam on the dark waters of despair. Speak to us again, that our folly may turn to wisdom and our dread to hope. Speak in the words of long ago; speak in the venture of our minds today; speak through every action that is a valiant doing of thy will. Speak so that we may know again there is God in heaven because there is love on earth. Through him who is the captain of our salvation and the chief of faithful souls. Amen.*

V. T. P.

## A Letter to the Editor

MILTON E. MUDER

(Minister, First Universalist Church, Woodsville, New Hampshire)

I much appreciate all of the issues of **Our Faith** but was especially impressed with the November number. In it, as it seems to me, you hit the nail on its proverbial head.

"Although I am now serving a Universalist parish, I have given more than twenty-five years to the Unitarian ministry. Originally ordained as a Methodist, I was attracted to the Unitarian ministry because Unitarianism, as interpreted by such as Martineau, Channing, Hale, James Freeman Clarke, and not least by our beloved Dr. Christie of Meadville, seemed to me to be the highest and best and truest interpretation of the religion of Jesus yet to appear, and more deeply spiritual than any form of so-called Christianity, with the exception, possibly, of that of the Society of Friends.

"It was as manna to my soul. I am somewhat of a mystic by nature, and I am a liberal because, as I understand spiritual reality, it is something too great to be compassed by any creed, and is deeper and broader than any and all attempted interpretations of it.

"I have no taste for controversy, and some of my most valued ministerial friends are (negative) humanists. I respect their convictions. I would be the last to wish to

have them excluded from our ministerial fellowship. But I think that it is too bad that they, of their own initiative, have not withdrawn and formed their own organization. The materialistic humanists may be right, and I may be wrong, but the two philosophies (negative humanism and theism, however broad and modern) can no more be made to mix than can the proverbial 'fire and water.' The one invariably cancels out the other.

"Personally I am much troubled to see Unitarianism, as I have come to know it and love it, deleted, diluted, and paralyzed by the inroads of atheistic humanism. And I do regret what seems to be the growing tendency of many of our friends and leaders to favor, in all ways possible, the development of humanism in our fellowship.

"Positive 'Christian' Unitarianism, which can be as modern as tomorrow's sunrise, has a message and a gospel which meets the spiritual needs of multitudes of hungry souls, if and as it is properly presented. Without naming it, I have preached it from the pulpits of Congregational churches, where it was most warmly welcomed and gratefully received. And, of course, Universalist congregations receive it as a true interpretation of their own faith, as it is. But here again, it must be said that the same negative humanism, although not yet to the same extent, is making inroads in Universalism as in Unitarianism—with paralyzing effect.

"Since man is a spiritual being and related to a Life larger than his own, is not that for this age the greatest truth that, religiously speaking, man can know or declare? If true, as it is, then the life of God in the soul of man is the hope of the world. Should we not, as Unitarians, have the privilege of making the most of it, without having to cope with the deadening effect of a materialistic and atheistic humanism such as is being expressed and encouraged by so many leaders of our fellowship?"

## *God Does Not Change*

DANA M. GREELEY
(Minister, Arlington Street Church, Boston, Mass.)

Man's experience of God has been from time immemorial, just as his vision of the stars in the heavens is as old as the sight of his eyes. But his ideas about those stars have changed considerably.

So also the knowledge of God has changed, but God has not changed. Experience has produced its diversified interpretations, but that which has been experienced has been always the same. God, like the stars, is from everlasting to everlasting.

Our concept of truth changes, whether in the astronomical or spiritual, whether in the physical or metaphysical realm. But the truth does not change. Our knowledge is increased or decreased; our awareness is sharpened or dimmed; our hearts are purified or corrupted; but the objective reality, which is truth, is not altered by our subjective condition, any more than taking the telescope from our eye removes fixed bodies from the firmament. If the law of gravitation is a fact, if love is stronger than hate, and if God is real, then our discovery or our doubting of these things has no relation to the truth itself. Man does not create the truth; he seeks it and acquaints himself with it.

Always we picture God as the highest and greatest that we know; but always He is higher and greater than we know. "Beyond, behind and within the passing flux of immediate things," changeless and without decay, the eternal purpose pulsates in the march of time. God is real as life is real. He is not a superstition any more than love is a figment of the imagination. Of course, there are superstitions about Him, as there are mists around the mountain that we view from a distance. But He is as substantial and as timeless as the mountain itself, as real as the beauty of the Grand Canyon. We in our finitude cannot ascend to His infinite heights, or plumb His bottomless depths; but we can discover that spirit with spirit doth meet, and we can be assured that He is all in all.

## *"The Daily Round, The Common Task"*

PALFREY PERKINS
(Minister, King's Chapel, Boston, Mass.)

The good life of mankind has gone on from strength to strength, from glory to glory, seldom by any grand or spectacular human achievements. Most of the time progress has come through quiet ordinary

meeting of life's responsibilities, by the casual word or the simple deed in out of the way quiet corners. It is there, more than in councils and conferences and congresses that events are happening now which will determine the destinies of the world of men. There in lives like yours and mine on familiar streets in simple homes—the issues of the future are being decided.

All of us have to do the quiet unspectacular things that matter just where we are, with what we have. All of us are shaping history under the will of God by doing the ordinary things as well and truly as we can.

There are gigantic complex forces of evil abroad in the world of our time. Just now they are trying to scare us out of our wits and shake us out of our religious faith. But these forces will meet their match in the homely virtues of Christian faith. These are the forces which make history. Out of these God and men together have shaped the present from the past. Out of these God and men together will shape the future from the present.

*(From a recent sermon)*

## Misusing Wilbur

Rev. C. Gordon Bolam, minister of High Pavement Chapel, Nottingham, delivered an address recently before the Annual Institute of the British Ministerial Fellowship on the "Ethos of Unitarianism" in which he delineated the traits in Unitarianism which betoken vitality and hold most significance for the future. To do this, he said, we must proceed with caution.

A pitfall to be avoided is illustrated by the way in which the three principles of our movement, as given by Dr. Wilbur in his **History of Unitarianism,** namely, freedom and reason and tolerance, may be misused. (As has already been pointed out in **Our Faith,** freedom **in religion** must not be construed as mere freedom.)

"The current tendency," said Mr. Bolam, "is to accept Dr. Wilbur's three principles as an effective definition of Unitarianism. This is only possible at the cost of snatching them from their context, where the historian clearly gives the grounds in reference to which his statement is valid. In isolation, those principles are not necessarily more definitive of a religious movement than of, say, an ethical society; they do not explain the content of the religious motive and inspiration which evoked this particular attitude and continues to hold them in supreme regard."

From all accounts, it may be remarked, the sense of union among English Unitarians is strong.

## A Letter From A Layman

W. H. ALEXANDER
(Now living in Berkeley, California)

"Enclosed you will find a dollar bill to continue the subscription which a friend took out for me last year.

"It is a good deal of a consolation to receive the little leaflet month by month, and to learn from it that the misrepresentation of the Unitarian purpose which now proceeds from high quarters (as well as from quarters a good deal lower) is not being passed over by at least a goodly number of real Unitarians who are informed by their tradition or by study, or both, what Unitarianism means. It is definitely not to my mind an annex of every last radicalism that springs up God knows where, although here on the West Coast one might suppose so! We have enough political and social wrangling surely on six days, without extending it to the seventh. And why all these strange 'isms' want to meet in a church and call themselves a church, I cannot fathom. The church is, by derivation, the 'Lord's house.' What they have made it, I will not be harsh enough to say.

"Locally, I have withdrawn from the Unitarian connection and 'adhered' to the Congregationalists. Perhaps there is a suggestion for the future in this. At all events, I get a real church service, and a sense of quiet worship.

"One thing that is intolerable to me is the glib and easy grouping of Jesus, Buddha, and Socrates. It is, on the clearest intellectual grounds, such an absurdity to pretend that in our western world there is any equality as among these three. Western civilization is built around and upon the Christ; it is a Christian civilization, not a Socratic civilization, nor a Buddhistic one. In the west, at all events, Jesus is the Name that is above every name in effective leadership. One does not need to make an

esoteric doctrine of it, but it is a great fact. Yet in so many Unitarian churches the very name of Jesus, like the use of the Christian Bible, is a mockery and scorn. What kind of church is this?"

## A Unitarian Laywoman Speaks

LAURA W. DODGE
(First Unitarian Church, Omaha, Nebraska)

In our Unitarian church of today we are not hampered by old tradition and outworn creeds. We have a liberal religion. There is both strength and danger in this diversity of free belief.

Perhaps the danger can best be summed up by quoting from a sentence in a recent sermon by a Unitarian minister. "Unitarians are non-sectarian minded people who find the sources of their religion in the aspirations of an informed conscience—and human intelligence."

The great Unitarians of the past did not reach the heights by any such narrow interpretation of their religion. They believed in a Higher Power without Whom they could only have given a hungry world a stone, instead of bread.

In some of our Unitarian churches we find the "brotherhood of man" emphasized—the "Fatherhood of God" reduced to a hash of meaningless confusion. We attend our churches hoping to find spiritual inspiration. We too often find the pulpit a platform. If we cannot find God in our churches, where **can** we find Him?

Surrounded as we are by constant reminders of want and suffering, where find the strength to help ease the burdens unless we believe in and ponder on the life of Christ—and feel our kinship in the something that is divine? How rise above depressing thoughts if we always contemplate them? The Unitarian Church still believes in putting the First Commandment first—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength."

Armed with this sublime concept of, and dependence upon, a Power which is in the world today, we can be strong with a strength that conquers all fear, all suffering. In no other way can liberal Unitarians unite successfully to bring about the Brotherhood of Man.

## A Letter

*July 29, 1948*

*Mr. Joseph Coulter:*
*Dear Sir;*

*Enclosed please find check for $2—one for a subscription to "Our Faith" and one as a contribution. Your little paper is like a breath of spiritual fresh air in present day Unitarianism so often devoid of the understanding of spiritual values. God is not unknowable to those who seek him truly.*

*Georgie May Jenness*
*Pres. of Dedham Alliance*
*Norwood, Mass.*

## United Unitarian Appeal

Contributions to the United Appeal may be ear-marked for any particular organization participating in the Appeal. Such ear-marked contributions will go to the particular organization for which they are ear-marked until such organization has received the amount previously allocated to it by the Appeal directors. The balance of the ear-marked money will go to the other participating organizations until all have received the full amounts allocated to them. If there is then any ear-marked money left over it will go to the organization for which it was ear-marked.

In the United Appeal nothing is allocated either to the Unitarian Christian Fellowship or to the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice. Contributions to the Unitarian Christian Fellowship should be sent direct to the treasurer, Joseph E. Coulter, 101 Tremont Street, Boston 8, Mass.

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